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INTRODUCTION OF '*KEVIN'S LAW*': *THE MEAT AND POULTRY PATHOGEN
REDUCTION AND ENFORCEMENT ACT*

THE HONORABLE ANNA G. ESHOO
OF CALIFORNIA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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MS. ESHOO: Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to join my colleague Representative Phil English in introducing important bipartisan legislation, '*Kevin's Law*': *the Meat and Poultry Pathogen Reduction and Enforcement Act*. This bipartisan bill will strengthen the ability of the U.S. Department of Agriculture to set and enforce food safety and sanitation standards for meat and poultry.

Kevin's Law is named in memory of 2 ½-year-old Kevin Kowalczyk, who died so tragically in 2001 after eating a hamburger contaminated with *E. coli O157:H7*. Kevin's untimely death was agonizing and brutal. No child, no person should experience the pain that Kevin did, and no family should have to bear witness to a loved one suffering in the way that Kevin did.

Sadly, Americans are far too vulnerable to fatal foodborne illnesses, especially children and the elderly. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that foodborne diseases cause roughly 76 million illnesses, 325,000 hospitalizations, and 5,000 deaths each year. The tragedy is that many of these illnesses can be prevented with better science standards and enforcement. Congress must do much more to ensure the safety of our nation's food supply.

In 2003, the National Academy of Sciences report *Scientific Criteria to Ensure Safe Food* recommended that Congress give regulatory agencies "the clear authority to establish and enforce compliance with science-based food safety criteria, including performance standards." This legislation is just what the doctor ordered. *Kevin's Law* addresses these recommendations and will help ensure that the government has the authority it needs to prevent contaminated meat and poultry from entering our food supply by:

- Requiring the USDA to identify the pathogens that threaten human health (e.g. *Salmonella*, *E. coli O157:H7*, *Listeria monocytogenes*).
- Requiring the USDA to establish performance standards to reduce the presence of these pathogens in meat and poultry.

- Confirming that the USDA has the authority to enforce its own standards by shutting down plants that continually breach basic health standards - authority that some processors have repeatedly challenged in court.

Passage of *Kevin's Law* would put into place major recommendations of the National Academy of Sciences and the National Advisory Committee for Microbiological Criteria for Foods, both of which have consistently supported greater federal enforcement of food safety standards.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the current 22 co-sponsors of *Kevin's Law* for their support of this bill, and I encourage all my colleagues to join me in helping to protect millions of other Americans from fatal foodborne illnesses by passing this legislation.

Finally, I thank Kevin's family for sharing their tragic story with the world, and especially Kevin's mother, Barbara Kowalczyk, and his grandmother, Pat Buck, for their continued important advocacy on behalf of increased safety standards for meat and poultry.